Abstract

Evolutionary educational psychology is the study of how children’s evolved learning and motivational biases influence their ability and motivation to learn in school. Evolved learning and motivational biases are organized around the domains of folk psychology, folk biology, and folk physics. There are also domain-general systems that comprise attentional control, working memory, and problem-solving competence that can be used to act on and modify folk systems. The combination supports the creation of cultural and academic innovations and children’s learning of these evolutionarily novel innovations in school. The basic premises and principles of evolutionary educational psychology are described, and their potential utility is illustrated by discussion of the relation between folk psychology and children’s learning to read and the relation between evolved motivational dispositions and children’s academic motivation.